

will say, "Gosh, my charter school or my high school isn't doing as good as my neighbor's. I better figure out why." That's what the accountability system does. It creates an atmosphere where we're raising that bar, we're challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. You know, when you lower the bar, guess what you get? You get lousy results. I suspect you've raised those standards, haven't you? We'll keep raising the bar.

Listen, I want to thank everybody for coming. We're on to victory. Thanks for your help. God bless. I appreciate you coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Speaker-designate Allan Bense of the Florida House of Representatives; Bev Kilmer, candidate for Congress in Florida's Second Congressional District; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab al Zarqawi; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in Panama City, Florida

August 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all very much. So Little Brother says, "Why don't you come to north Florida; maybe we can get come people to show up." We are so honored so many came out to say hello. Thanks a lot. We really appreciate you being here. I'm here to ask for your vote. I'm here traveling—I'm traveling this part of your State to let the people of north Florida know there is more to do to make this country safer, stronger, and better. And I want your help.

I'm keeping fine company. I'm proud to be traveling with Senator John McCain. What a fantastic American he is. I'm glad Brother is here. He's doing a great job for the people of Florida, and I'm proud to call him Brother. I know you're proud to call him Governor.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. No, I know it. She's a great wife and a wonderful mother, and she's doing a heck of a job as the First Lady of this country. Today I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back into office, but perhaps the most important one of all

is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

And I'm proud of my runningmate. I admit he's not the prettiest face in the race. [Laughter] But I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment. I picked him because he can do the job.

I'm proud my friend J.C. Watts is here, I appreciate you being here, J.C. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings and Attorney General Charlie Crist for joining us today. I'm proud to be on the stage with them. I want to thank the House Speaker-designate Allan Bense for being on the bus and traveling with us today. We've been traveling with Bev Kilmer as well. Put her in the House. She'll be a great Member of the U.S. Congress.

I want to thank Aaron Tippin for being here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists. Those are the people who put up the signs, make the phone calls. Make sure you go out and register your friends and neighbors. See, we have a duty in this country to vote. We have an obligation in a free society to show up at the polls. Don't be afraid of convincing discerning Democrats and wise independents to go to the polls as well. They know what good government is. They know strong leadership when they see it. They understand the world is going to be safer and stronger and better with 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In the past few years, we've been through a lot together, and we've accomplished a great deal together. But there's only one reason to look backwards, and that is to determine who best to lead this Nation forward. I'm asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have so much more to do to move this Nation forward. I want to be your President for 4 more years. From creating jobs to improving our schools, from fighting terror to spreading the peace, we made much progress, and there is more to do—and there is more to do.

We've got more to do to make our schools, our public schools, the centers of excellence we know they can be so no child is left behind in America. Listen, when we came to office 3½ years ago, too many of our children

were being shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We believe in challenging the status quo when children are trapped in schools which will not teach and will not change. And we're making real progress. We're making real progress.

We've got more to do. I understand the jobs of the future will require greater knowledge and higher-level skills, so we're going to work to reform our high schools so a high school diploma means something. We'll expand science and math education so our young people can compete in a high-tech world. We'll expand the use of the Internet to bring high-level training in the classrooms. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will gain the skills and the competence necessary to realize the American Dream.

We've got more to do to make quality health care available and affordable. When we came to office, too many older Americans heard year after year after year the promise of prescription drugs for Medicare. We got the job done. More than 4 million seniors have signed up for drug discount cards that provide real savings. And in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a plan that fits their needs, and Medicare will give them coverage for prescription drugs.

We've done more, though, than that in health care. We've expanded community centers to help low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. But there's more to do. See, most Americans get their health care coverage through their work, yet many small businesses, which create the most new jobs in America, cannot afford health coverage. So you know what we need to do? We need to let our small businesses pool together, join together so they can purchase insurance at the discounts available to the big companies.

To improve health care, we must end the frivolous lawsuits that run up the cost of health care and run the doctors out of business. You cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You

have to choose. And my opponent has made his choice: He put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice: I am for medical liability reform now.

Listen, we're going to use technology to reduce cost and prevent health care mistakes. We'll do more to expand research to seek new cures. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Government bureaucrats.

We got more to do to make this economy stronger. We've been through a lot when it comes to our economy. We've been through a recession. We've been through scandals. We've been through the terror attack. And yet we've overcome these obstacles, because our workers are great, our small businesses are strong, our farmers are good at what they do. I also think we overcame these obstacles because of two well-timed tax cuts. We didn't pick winners or losers when it came to tax relief. We said if you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief. And we're helping American families with that tax relief. If you have a family with children, you get tax relief. If you married, you get tax relief. We've got a Tax Code that has a marriage penalty.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We ought to be encouraging marriage in this country, not penalizing marriage.

And our tax relief helped small businesses. And this time, the check really was in the mail. [*Laughter*] Listen, because we acted, our economy since last summer has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added over 1.5—nearly 1.5 million new jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent. Because we acted, Florida has added almost 300,000 new jobs since the end of 2001, and your unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. People in this State are working, and that's good for our country.

Listen, I'm not going to be satisfied until everybody who wants to work can find a job, and so there's more to do. To keep jobs in America, regulations must be reasonable and fair. To keep jobs in America, we must reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. To keep jobs in America, we need tort reform. To keep jobs in America, we will

not overspend your money, and we will keep your taxes low. To keep jobs in America, we will help our workers retrain, when necessary, at places like our community colleges. To keep jobs in America, we will level the playing field when it comes to trade. Listen, America can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as we're treated fairly.

What I'm telling you is, if you give me 4 more years, we will still be the leading economy in the world, our farm economy will be strong, more small businesses will exist, and Americans will be able to have better and higher-paying jobs.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. That is not going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as a home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, because we were resolute and firm, today Afghanistan is a rising democracy; Afghanistan is an ally on terror. Many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan, thanks to the United States and our coalition. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Prior to September the 11th, Pakistan was a safe transit point for terrorists. Today, Pakistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Saudi Arabia was not paying attention to those who were raising money and recruiting and operating with little opposition. Today, the Saudi Government is taking the fight to Al Qaida. They're an ally in the war on terror. America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. Remember, he was firing weapons at American pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He was a threat. He used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world.

After September the 11th, we looked at all the threats in the world in a new light. One of the lessons of that fateful day, a lesson I will never forget as your President, is that we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize. My administration saw a threat. We looked at intelligence; it further confirmed in our mind that Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United States Congress—Members of both political parties, including my opponent—looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion: Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at that intelligence and came to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat.

The United Nations Security Council then demanded a full accounting of his weapons and his weapons programs, or face serious consequences. As he had for over a decade, the tyrant refused to comply with the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, he systematically deceived the inspectors that were in his country. And so I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the actions and words of a madman, or take action to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

No, we didn't find the stockpiles we expected to find. Yet, he had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have easily shared that capability with terrorist enemies. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer because Saddam sits in a prison cell.

Almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the anti-war candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision

to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry now agrees with me that even though we have not found the stockpile of weapons we believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank Senator Kerry for clearing that up. But be careful, there's still 84 days left in this campaign for him to change his mind.

Listen, I'm running for 4 more years because there's more work to do. We'll work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you can't talk sense to these people. You can't negotiate with these people. You cannot hope that they change. We will aggressively pursue them. We will engage them. We will defeat them so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. See, we put together a strong coalition to help us. There's over 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan. There are some 30 nations involved in Iraq. We thank their leaders, we thank their people for sacrificing for freedom and peace. We'll continue to build alliances and work with our friends. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

In these crucial times, America's commitments are kept by the men and women who wear our uniform. I am really proud of our military, and I know you are as well. I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I have seen their decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

And we have a duty in Government to make sure those who wear our uniform are fully supported by the Government. Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in our missions. The legislation provided body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, spare parts,

fuel, health benefits, and ammunition. In the Senate, only a small, out-of-the-mainstream minority of 12 Senators voted against the legislation. Two of those twelve Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When asked about why he voted no to support our troops, he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." Now, I've spent some time here in north Florida; I understand that's not the way the people talk up here. They like people who say one thing and mean it. And then when pressed he said, well, he's proud of his vote, and then he said, well, the whole thing is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror: poverty and hopelessness and resentment. See, a peaceful and free Iraq and a peaceful and free Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries listen to the dreams and aspirations of their people. Afghanistan and Iraq have now got strong leaders who are committed to free societies. The people of those countries, having been brutalized by tyrants, are now beginning to step up and take responsibility. More Afghan citizens and more Iraqis are joining their militaries and police forces to secure their own country so it can be free.

See, by serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others and that makes America more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're spreading peace. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of our Nation. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Listen, we've got a lot of work to do, and I understand that. That's why I'm running for 4 more years. There are enemies who hate us, and they're still plotting to harm us. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. His logic is upside-down. It shows a dangerous misunderstanding of the enemy

we face. See, during the nineties, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before we went to war with them. They hate us. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. It was wrong to blame America for the anger and evil of the killers. We don't create terrorists by fighting back. We defeat terrorists by fighting back.

I agree with the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission when they said our homeland is safer, but we're not yet safe. We've got more to do. We'll secure this homeland by staying on the offense. We're going to do—to secure this homeland as well, by continuing to push for meaningful reform. Listen, we started the hard process. We transformed our defenses and created a Department of Homeland Security to better protect you. We passed the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act is necessary to give law enforcement the tools necessary to track down terrorists.

We're integrating intelligence and law enforcement better than ever before. We're taking action on a lot of the commission's recommendations. Today I name a good Floridian to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Congressman Porter Goss is my nominee before the United States Senate. We'll work together to strengthen that vital agency, so we have the intelligence necessary to better secure our homeland. I also will look forward to working with Congress to create the position of National Intelligence Director, so one person is in charge of coordinating all our intelligence, both overseas and domestic.

These reforms aren't going to be easy. They're never easy in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, people willing to defend the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform, you have to be able to get it done. When it comes to improving our public schools, we got the job done. When it comes to improving health care for our senior citizens, we got the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and creating jobs, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing our homeland and spreading the peace, we're getting the job done. When it comes to electing a President, put somebody in office who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Listen, we live in exciting times—exciting times. But they're times of change. In order to help people through times of change, I think the Government ought to stand side by side with families and workers. One way to do that is promote an ownership society in America. See, we want people owning their own health care accounts, so if they change jobs their health care account goes with them. We want people to have more control over their lives. We want people being the decisionmakers when it comes to health care.

When it comes to our retirement accounts, listen, old guys like me and McCain are in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security. But if you're a younger worker, there is doubt as to whether or not Social Security is fiscally sound enough to—for you. That's why I think younger workers need personal savings accounts, so they can take them from job to job and pass them on to people they want to pass them on to.

In a changing world, I think it's a positive sign to know more people own their own home. Homeownership rates are at an all-time high in America. I love the fact when a new homebuyer can open the door and say, "Welcome to my house. This is my home." We want more people owning their own business. There's nothing better, when you say you own something in America. If you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a world that changes, some things that are not going to change, our belief in liberty, in opportunity, in the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. The individual values we try to live by won't change, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; our belief in institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for institutions like marriage and families, which are the foundation of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. Listen, this culture of ours is beginning to change from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved yourself.

I understand the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I'm running for 4 more years to continue to rally the armies of compassion so that we can help and heal and change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time we need firm resolve and clear vision. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. I remember the guys in hardhats screaming at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember working the ropeline and looking in the eyes of a man who had just come out of the rubble searching for a buddy. He said, "Do not let me down."

He took that day personally. All the people at that site took it personally. You took it personally, and I took it personally. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every day trying to figure out how best to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through a lot. We've come through a lot together. We've done a lot of hard work. We're moving our country forward. During the next 4 years, we will spread opportunity and ownership through every corner of this country. During the next 4

years, we'll pass the enduring values of our Nation to another generation. During the next 4 years, we will lead the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

Four years ago, I traveled this great State and this great country asking for the vote, and I made a pledge to my fellow Americans, if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, we will carry Florida, we will carry America, and I will continue—I will continue to honor my high office.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Panama City Marina. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush, Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, and State Attorney General Charlie Crist of Florida; former Representative J.C. Watts, Jr., of Oklahoma; Speaker-designate Allan Bense of the Florida House of Representatives; Bev Kilmer, candidate for Congress in Florida's Second Congressional District; country music entertainer Aaron Tippin; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks in a Discussion at Eclipse Aviation in Albuquerque, New Mexico

August 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you all are here. Thank you all for coming. It's good to be back. Please be seated. Yes, thanks for being here today. It's good to be back—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. [Laughter] It's good to be back in country where people wear cowboy hats.

Thanks for your hospitality. I'm traveling our country asking for the vote. I think you have to go out and ask people for their help and ask people for their support. I've got a reason for running again—I'm going to share some of that with you today. We're going to do it in a little different way. We're going to talk about small businesses. We'll talk about homeownership. We're going to talk about jobs and education, all aimed to let the people know that I have a desire to make